

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02

INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04

USIA-06 SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 PA-01

PRS-01 /103 W

----- 087946

R 020935Z JAN 76

FM AMCONSL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8566

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE HONG KONG 0050

E.O. 11691: N,A

TAGS: EEWT ENRG UN US

SUBJ: PRESS REPORT ON US OIL FIRM CONTACTS WITH HANOI

1. THE HONG KONG PRESS HAS CARRIED A NEW YORK TIMES SERVICE ARTICLE FILED FROM PARIS JANUARY 1 ALLEGING THAT AMERICAN OIL COMPANIES HAVE MADE INFORMAL CONTACT WITH HANOI TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE ARRANGEMENTS TO RENEW OIL EXPLORATIONS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, OFF THE COAST OF SOUTH VIETNAM. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE "SOUNDINGS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AT MEETINGS IN SUCH PLACES AS PARIS AND HONG KONG WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE AMERICAN TREASURY AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT". "EXXON OIL COMPANY AND A CONSORTIUM OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENTS" WERE MENTIONED AS THE FIRMS INVOLVED.

2. ESSO MARKETING DIRECTOR IN HONG KONG (AND FORMER DIRECTOR IN SAIGON) EDWIN KETCHUM INFORMED A CONGEN
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OFFICER THAT HE AS UNAWARE OF ANY SUCH CONTACTS ON THE

PART OF EXXON. KETCHUM NOTED THAT HE HAD JUST MET WITH THE EXXON ASIA CHIEF AND ASSERTED THAT THE MATTER WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE COME UP IF THERE WERE TRUTH TO THE REPORT. KETCHUM ADDED THAT HE HEARD STORIES OF OTHER US OIL FIRMS TALKING TO DRV REPS IN SINGAPORE AND INDONESIA BUT NOT IN HONG KONG. (REPORTS OF SUCH CONTACTS HAVE ALSO APPEARED IN THE PRESS).

3. NYT HONG KONG BUREAU CHIEF BUTTERFIELD TOLD A CONGEN OFFICER THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION ON THE SOURCE OF THE NYTS STORY AND ALSO APPEARED TO BE VERY SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE REPORT.
CROSS

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